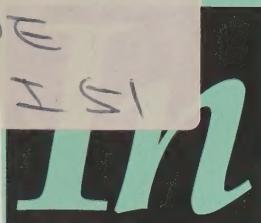


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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Minister Announces New Curriculum for Ontario

On Tuesday, February 7, 1995, Ontario Minister of Education and Training announced major changes to the curriculum in Ontario's elementary and secondary schools. The Common Curriculum will consist of a series of policy documents that will make up the new province-wide curriculum from Junior Kindergarten to the end of secondary school. The Common Curriculum will include documents outlining outcomes and standards and curriculum materials, which together will form Ontario's core curriculum. Although the ministry will continue to consult with its educational partners, it will assume responsibility for developing the new curriculum to ensure that there will be a consistent, high-quality curriculum across the province.

The Minister also released the first three policy documents in the series: *The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9,*

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1995 and field-test versions of *The Common Curriculum: Provincial Standards, Language, Grades 1-9* and *The Common Curriculum: Provincial Standards, Mathematics, Grades 1-9.*

The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995 is a revision of *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9, 1993.* It replaces both the original document and the 1993 version for parents. Implementation of the new curriculum began in September 1993. Full implementation

of the policies and outcomes set out in *The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995* is to take place by September 1996.

With their increased emphasis on equity and excellence for all students and on partnerships and public accountability, all three documents reflect the direction indicated by the Royal Commission on Learning in its report, which was released on January 26, 1995.

The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995

The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9 was released in two versions in 1993 as a working document. Its revised version is now entitled *The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995* (referred to as *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9* or the 1995 document in this article). The changes in *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9* are based on the results of a province-wide consultation that was carried out from September 1993 to June 1994 and on the recommendations of the review committee. The review process and the recommendations were summarized in the September/October 1994 issue of *In Common.*

Though there is necessarily considerable continuity with the original document, *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9* is clearer and more accessible to all readers.

Key Features of Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9

What are the key features of the new document? The five key features of the 1993 document continue to be key features, or focuses, of the 1995 document, but a sixth key feature, "Excellence and Equity", has been added. Excellence and equity were identified as two of the four

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The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1–9, 1995

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commitments of education in Ontario in the 1993 document. In the 1995 document, excellence and equity have been placed together as a key feature to highlight not only their importance but also their inextricable connection.

Thus, in addition to excellence and equity, the key features deal with: outcomes-based learning, a curriculum for all students, the making of connections, the importance of working together, and assessment, evaluation, and reporting.

Outcomes-Based Learning

Learning outcomes describe the measurable results of learning for all students. The essential outcomes describe the results of learning to be achieved across the entire curriculum; the specific outcomes provide further detail about the essential outcomes and are located in the most appropriate program area. Together, all the outcomes describe the knowledge, skills, and values

students will need for daily living, work, and further learning, and provide the basis for provincial standards and for program improvement.

A Curriculum for All Students

The Common Curriculum is designed for all students. All students must achieve all of the outcomes and the achievement of the outcomes by all students will be assessed in relation to the provincial standards.

In order for all students to attain the high level of achievement represented by the outcomes, the means used to enable students to achieve the outcomes must vary. The time devoted to diverse areas, the teaching and assessment methods, the resources used, and even the content will vary as needed.

Heterogeneous classes and flexible groupings can help all students to successfully achieve the outcomes by providing interaction with students of varied abilities and backgrounds. Students who

are learning English as a second language (ESL) may require program modifications to achieve the outcomes. Program considerations for ESL students are found in Appendix A of *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1–9*. Students with special needs may also require program modifications, including modification of the standards and even of the outcomes.

The Making of Connections

Integrated learning emphasizes the connections among subjects, ideas, people, and things, and it involves the use of varied resources and locations for learning. The Common Curriculum assists students in the successful achievement of the essential learning outcomes because it provides a broad content base from which choices and applications that are relevant for students can be made.

Collaboration among teachers is essential to provide the range of expertise needed so that students can apply the subject skills and knowledge learned in one area to another area and to real-life situations.

The Importance of Working Together

Although it is the task of the teachers and the school to ensure that all students achieve the outcomes, this goal is also a shared responsibility involving the students, the parents and guardians, the community, the school board, and the ministry. Teachers, students, and parents need to communicate regularly about outcomes, standards, programming, ongoing evaluation, and plans for student improvement and placement.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting

Accountability for student achievement of the outcomes is a key focus of the Common Curriculum. The purpose of assessment is the improvement of student learning. Therefore, assessment must be

Using The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1–9, 1995

To use this document to:	See:
1. connect essential and specific outcomes	Part Three and Appendix C
2. connect outcomes from various program areas	Appendix C
3. plan outcomes-based programming	Part Three
4. identify differences between planning based on objectives and planning based on outcomes	Part Two
5. plan appropriate programming for ESL students	Appendix A
6. plan integrated programming	Parts Two and Three
7. connect learning, teaching, curriculum, and assessment	Part One
8. connect assessment, evaluation, reporting, and student placement	Part One
9. help parents to help their children learn	Introduction
10. connect outcomes and provincial standards	Part Three (Language and Mathematics, Science, and Technology) and <i>The Common Curriculum: Provincial Standards, Language, Grades 1–9</i> and <i>The Common Curriculum: Provincial Standards, Mathematics, Grades 1–9</i>
11. learn more about particular topics related to the Common Curriculum	Introduction (Notes) and Part Three (Notes)

ongoing, and a wide variety of methods must be employed. The provincial standards, both those released with *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1–9* and those that will be developed, together with the outcomes provide the basis for assessing, evaluating, and reporting on student achievement. In their reporting procedures, teachers and schools should include plans for improvement of student achievement and of programs. Program improvement must be based on success in enabling all students to achieve the outcomes.

A New Key Feature: Excellence and Equity

By placing them together as a key feature of the document, *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1–9* makes a clear commitment to excellence and equity for all students. Excellence and equity not only are complementary but also each is essential to the achievement of the other. Only by recognizing and addressing diversity can excellence be achieved. A school that responds to the needs of all of its students is a school that is best at promoting educational excellence.

Changes Made in Response to Consultation

The changes to the 1993 document suggested by respondents in the consultation process fell into four broad groupings: clear links among documents, strengthened explanations, simplification of the organization of the outcomes, and better description of the outcomes.

Clear Links Among Documents

Respondents suggested that the connections the document has with other published sources and with the review process itself needed to be made clearer. They also objected to the failure to cite sources in the 1993 document. The 1995 document identifies relevant sources. Ministry policy and resource documents are listed in Appendix B. References to educational research and literature are found in the chapter endnotes. The document also includes Acknowledgements, which list

groups and individuals who contributed to the document.

In addition, a bibliography of materials that relate to key features of the document will be published over the next several issues of *In Common*.

Strengthened Explanations

Because the 1993 document was criticized for providing a limited rationale for changing the curriculum and only brief explanations of the key features, all these elements have been expanded in the 1995 document. The expanded explanations acknowledge, on the one hand, that there is a need for a common basic education for all students and, on the other, that students learn in different ways and at different rates. As a result, the document emphasizes that the Common Curriculum will enable all students to develop employability and lifelong-learning skills, while addressing the differences resulting from students' individual learning styles, different kinds of intelligence, and variety of background.

In the 1995 document, outcomes-based learning and integrated programming have been defined more clearly and described in terms of school practice. Emphasis is placed on the essential link between outcomes-based learning and integrated learning and on the role of both approaches in assisting students to learn successfully.

Simplification of the Organization of the Outcomes

The three levels of outcomes in the 1993 document – essential, general, and specific – were criticized because they were found to be too complex. Many of the general outcomes were considered cross-curricular, rather than specific to a program area. The organization of the outcomes in the 1995 document has therefore been simplified.

The 1995 document has only two levels of outcomes: essential and specific. The essential outcomes are cross-curricular. They are defined in terms of skills and abilities to be achieved by students,

not in terms of subject disciplines. The general outcomes of the 1993 document have been taken out of the program areas, repetition among them has been eliminated, and those that remained have been placed as part of the appropriate essential outcomes. Thus the ten essential learning outcomes apply in all program areas and are the responsibility of all teachers.

The connections between the essential outcomes and the specific outcomes have been clarified and emphasized in two ways. Each specific outcome is followed by numbers that indicate the essential outcome(s) to which it is linked. As well, Appendix C contains a cross-referenced list of key specific outcomes linked to each essential outcome. This list uses a standard letter and number coding system and is organized by essential outcomes. It is intended to facilitate integrated programming within the school by identifying some of the key connections between the essential outcomes and the specific outcomes and among the specific outcomes of the four program areas.

Better Description of the Outcomes

Much of the criticism of the 1993 document was aimed at the outcomes. The revision of the outcomes was therefore a major task, and the result has been significant improvement. The outcomes in the 1995 document are clearer and shorter. The vague verbs of the 1993 document have been replaced by demonstrative verbs such as "analyse", "communicate", "make a case for", and "apply". Because the use of examples with outcomes in the Mathematics, Science, and Technology program area in the 1993 document was very much appreciated, the outcomes for all of the program areas now include examples. The examples help to clarify the outcomes by linking the outcomes to practice, providing sample teaching/learning strategies, and illustrating what students might do to achieve a particular outcome.

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Provincial Implementation Committee Reports

The provincial implementation committee has completed its work, and it submitted its recommendations for implementation of *The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995* to the ministry on December 16, 1994.

The implementation committee was composed of representatives of the following groups: parents, students, business, labour, community organizations, supervisory officers' associations, the Ontario Teachers' Federation and its affiliates, and the Ministry of Education and Training. Joanne Zywine, Superintendent of Education Services, Halton Board of Education, was the Chair of the committee.

Beginning in June 1994 and continuing through the fall, the committee members met to familiarize themselves with the proposed changes to the original 1993 working versions of *The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9*, examine implementation issues that were raised in the submissions received through the review and revision process, identify innovative practices currently being used in schools and school boards, and develop and recommend appropriate activities that could be used as part of an effective provincial implementation strategy.

Announcement

After having led the Common Curriculum Project at the Ministry of Education and Training since 1992, Dr. Ron Wideman has now moved to TVOntario's Children's and Youth Programming department. At TVO, Ron will lead a two-year project to redirect TVO's curriculum programming to support the Common Curriculum and other related education initiatives. The project is fundamental to TVO's work in curriculum programming. We wish Ron the very best in his new challenge.

The provincial strategy recommended by the committee provides a framework for implementation. It is intended to initiate the innovative changes that are needed at the local level. The strategy incorporates six interdependent components that the committee felt are necessary to support systemic change. The six components are: communication, teacher development, resources, leadership,

partnerships, and accountability. Inherent in the thinking behind each component is the assumption that time and research will be required to achieve the desired outcomes.

The recommendations of the committee will serve as a guide for the next phase of implementation of *The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995*.

Ontario Curriculum Clearinghouse

The Ontario Curriculum Clearinghouse (OCC), formerly called Clearing House of Resource Materials, is now in operation. OCC is an independent service supported by the Ministry of Education and Training and operated in partnership with teachers' federations, trustee associations, and supervisory officers' associations. It serves as a point of contact for teachers, school boards, and other groups and individuals requesting information about curriculum resource materials.

The focus in the January 1995 OCC catalogue will be on materials for the Transition Years; later editions will include materials for Junior Kindergarten through to Ontario Academic Courses. You may contact OCC at:

Ontario Curriculum
Clearinghouse
18th Floor
439 University Ave
Toronto ON M5G 1Y8
Telephone: (416) 591-1577 or
1-800-837-3048
Fax: (416) 591-1578

The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9, 1995

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All of the specific outcomes in *Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9* have been evaluated to ensure that they are appropriate to the age of students and that they build on skills, values, and knowledge that students develop as they progress from Grade 3 to Grade 6 to Grade 9. As well, instead of having differing numbers of outcomes in each of Grades 3, 6, and 9, there is now the same number of outcomes in each grade. In addition, the phrase "the student will also" is included in the header for Grades 6 and 9 because, although students may have attained a particular outcome at the end of Grade 3, that outcome should continue to be developed in

the higher grades. Learning is not a series of obstacles to be overcome and once gotten over, to be forgotten. Learning is a continuous process of reinforcement and development.

Conclusion

Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1-9 reflects the suggestions received from many stakeholders in education. This document represents a truly collaborative effort that shows the ministry's commitment to partnership and its ongoing work to make a fine educational system even better. It is a document that will take Ontario education for Grades 1 to 9 into the twenty-first century.